

# Viburnum Leaf Beetle

## 2006 Control Recommendations



### Description

The adult viburnum leaf beetle is about ¼” long and dark golden brown. The larva is greenish, also about ¼” long and is usually hidden on the undersides of the leaves between the veins. People tend to notice the damaged leaves before they see the pest. Bring a sample to our office for a free identification.

### Damage and Occurrence

As its name implies, this beetle feeds only on plants in the genus *Viburnum* but there are many species commonly found in our region. Highbush cranberry or cranberry bush (*Viburnum opulus*) is extremely common in landscapes, Arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*) is widespread throughout Adirondack woodlands, American cranberry (*V. trilobum*), Nannyberry, Wayfaring tree, and Blackhaw are all viburnums, too.

This pest is especially damaging because it damages viburnums 3 different ways. The adult lays its eggs in branch tips, killing the branch from that point forward, and both the adult and larva devour the leaves. Just when the plant has produced new leaves after being attacked by the larvae, the adults emerge to feed on those new leaves. Arrowwood shrubs have been killed after just 2 years of attack by this pest.

### Life Cycle

The viburnum leaf beetle overwinters as an egg laid in the branch tips. Larvae hatch as the leaves begin to grow in early May. In early June the larvae move to the ground where they pupate and they emerge as adult beetles in early July. One generation occurs each year. Adults continue to feed until frost. There is one generation per year.

### Control

The first recommendation is to avoid planting susceptible varieties but unfortunately, all the viburnums that are hardy to our region are susceptible. The varieties with thick, hairy leaves are more resistant but most are not hardy here. *Viburnum carlesii* (Korean spicebush) is marginally hardy in the Champlain Valley but is prone to attack by aphids that limit its use.

Prune and destroy branch terminals with egg laying sites before the larva emerge in May. Check the label to be sure your plant and this pest is listed. Possible products include Bayer’s Advanced Garden Rose and Insect Killer (containing cyfluthrin and imidacloprid), malathion and Sevin (containing carbaryl).

### Lake Friendly Gardening Tip – Right Plant for the Right Place

If you have a viburnum that is hit each year, consider replacing it with anything except a viburnum. And don’t buy any more viburnums. The common names of plants in this

group are misleading (cranberry bush , arrowwood, nannyberry) – ask the nursery people if the plant you're considering is actually a viburnum.

**Lake Friendly Gardening Tip – Think Before You Spray!**

If you decide to spray, the larva is easier to control than the adult so time your spray for when the larva is present. Remember that the larvae are on the undersides of the leaves so direct your spray to reach that surface.

PESTICIDE DISCLAIMER: Every effort has been made to provide correct, complete and up-to-date pesticide recommendations. Nevertheless, changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly, human errors are still possible. These recommendations are not a substitute for pesticide labeling. Please read the label before applying any pesticide and follow the directions exactly.

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